

Revitalization for Clubs in Decline

REVITALIZE! REGENERATE! GIVE YOUR CLUB NEW STRENGTH!

This is the time for Altrusa's Renaissance and it is up to all of us to make it Our Time.

The formula is simple; the execution complex. We know all the ingredients; retain members, both long time seasoned members and new members, and attract new members. Then implement our brand drivers ~~ Clarity, Flexibility and Inclusion. Ultimately, Clarity + Flexibility + Inclusion = Trust and Growth for Altrusa.

Retaining long time members is the easy part of revitalizing a club; after all, we build friendships, become attached to projects, and experience the satisfaction that comes from seeing the fruits of our efforts in our communities. However, retaining new members can be more challenging unless we continue to remember why we became Altrusans and why we are still actively involved. Retaining new members takes a special effort on the part of current members. Although primarily the responsibility of the sponsor, it is up to all the Altrusans to make the new member feel welcomed and part of the group. There are many ways of achieving this end result. Here are a few tips.

- Make a long-time seasoned member, not necessarily the sponsor, responsible to serve as a mentor. It can be as easy as offering the new member a ride to the meetings or to a service project – it's easier to say "I'm busy" to a friend.
- We all tend to talk to our friends and catch up with those that we haven't seen since the last meeting which could be uncomfortable for a new member. Include new members in conversations; no one wants to feel like an outsider.
- Most new members join to participate in community service – keep your members busy with exciting hands on projects. Immediately involve new members in service projects.
- Educate your new members in the Altrusa way. Start orientation with the amazing history of Altrusa's beginnings to the role and responsibilities and obligations of membership. This could be presented in a fun way perhaps in the form of a game (bingo, jeopardy). Continue new member training by sharing information on the workings of the various club committees to the opportunities for personal growth and learning
- Give new members a voice. Solicit their ideas and suggestions. This is an organization of leaders, whether fledgling or established. Growth comes from discourse, encourage it!

Recruiting new members is more challenging. We've all heard it before; three of the most common excuses that work to perpetuate the decline of organizations: One, "We are happy with our size, bringing in new people will ruin the chemistry." If every club felt that way, Altrusa would have died long ago. Share the joy of Altrusa with others in your community. Strive for diversity in your club.

Chemistry is all about things happening, not of stagnation. Two, "We don't need men in Altrusa". Rotary and Kiwanis to name a couple of "men only" organizations used to say the same thing about

women. No longer. These organizations are now reaching out to women, who are helping them increase their membership. Three, "I don't come across people to ask to join." This one is probably the easiest of the three to work on because it doesn't require a major attitude change, just ideas and follow through. Some of these are:

- Make a list of friends and relatives who you think would benefit from becoming Altrusans
- Join forces with other Altrusa Clubs near you and hold membership events
- Speak about Altrusa to local business owners i.e. the owner of the boutique or the restaurant you frequent. They are supported by the community; it would serve them well to return the favor.
- Speak to your librarian. Invite her/him to a membership drive. Altrusans love and dedication to Literacy is sure to make an impression.
- Collaborate with other non-profits in your community. Co-host events. Get Altrusa's name out there.
- Use the tools available to you. Work with your District Board. The Board is there to support you. Ask for help. No one can do it alone!

The longer clubs wait to bring in new members, the more difficult it becomes to attract the type of members that make Altrusa a vibrant, progressive organization. Revitalization starts with each one of us. The International Association is working hard to give us the tools that will help us on the road to healthy clubs, but tools unused are just dust collectors.

You will find an example of how to make growing membership a club project and how to develop a membership growth action plan in the Membership tool kit on the International website.

Here are some red flags that indicate your club might need revitalization:

- Meeting Attendance is Low
- No Membership Growth
- Under charter strength
- Retention of Members is Poor
- Committees Not Functioning
- Difficult to Find Club Officers
- Management of Club in Hands of a Few
- No Leadership Training Provided

- **Poor Communication Between Board & Members**
- **Service Project Lacks Club Support**
- **No Club Evaluation with Members' Input**
- **Club Has No Long Range Strategic Plan in Place**
- **Club Has No Representation at Conference and/or Convention**
- **Club has No Representation at the District and/or International Level**
- **Members are not engaged at monthly meetings**
- **Negativity among some members. It is contagious.**
- **Clicks in the club. Not working as a team**
- **Members resistance to change and new ideas**
- **Closed minded about recruiting male Altrusans.**
- **Club Officers are Discouraged**